

HOMIE

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The problem statement

Our society is changing! The isolation of people and social distancing are not only an actual problem, created by Covid19, but also a general issue in the era of digitalization. The term “being connected with someone” became a different meaning today and our relationships appear in countless different shapes.

Through Design Research und User Testing in the field of “changing social environments” we found out, that the aspect we are missing the most, is the physical contact and the feeling of “really being connected” to someone. Additionally in this period of #stayhome, the lack of daylight and Vitamin D is challenging us. We feel like losing any sense of time and struggling with keeping up our daily rhythms.

All together, the (unexpected and fast-paced) physical disconnection to our social environment, the loss of daily routines and the limited contact to nature, while being “locked-up” (alone) in our four-walls can overwhelm us. Depression, anxiety and a worse mental health are often the consequences.

The Solution

HOMIE - someone you truly feel comfortable with!

“Homie” is the short version of the term “homeboy or homegirl”. It describes a friend or a kid from the neighbourhood you know since ages and you have a special connection with.

We developed “homie” (a special blanket) to support our society during (and after) the current situation and encourage people with less sensible behavior or even fear. In addition, we have taken into consideration the impacts of the this situation, to prevent mental health as well as maintain social connections by using the benefits of textile electronic technologies.

The Concept / Goals

HOMIE is a BLANKET with the aim to:

- (re)connect people
- satisfy their needs of physical contact
- compensate the desire for a natural lightning situation

Into the familiar knitting of a blanket, we special fibres that fulfill these aims through the techniques of textile electronics.

HOMIE is an APP with the aim to:

- keep up relationships
- increase social interaction while isolation
- build up a special connection in between people

As addition we have developed the HOMIE App, integrate that upgrades your blanket and creates a feeling physical connection and a real time interaction with your homies.

To create a product that truly reflects the needs of our users, we created four personas: Two female, Svenja, a 36 year old woman who follows her job in a communication



agency from home and maintains a long distance love relationship to her boyfriend. Often she is finding herself in need of physical and mental comfort.

Maria, a 75 year old woman, retired and a widow who lives alone in the center of the city, is used to receive many visits from her children and grandchildren and loves to have her freedom to go to the country and be surrounded by nature. Due to the pandemic situation, she belongs to the risk group and has to stay at home. Without being able to receiving the normal visits from her family, each day is becoming more and more difficult to her.

And Our two male personas are Lukas, a 17 year old, active and rebellious young man who spends much of his free time hanging out with his friends. Due to the current situation, he is obliged to stay at home, which makes him angry and unmotivated.

Our last persona is Paulo, a 46 year old, single father working as a freelancer in the creative industry. With his 4 year old son at home, the days become even more tiring and there is very little time left for him to connect with his parents and friends. He needs physical contact and support for taking care of his son and managing his job at the same time.

In the next step, we simulate the thoughts and behaviors of the personas while interacting with our product (HOMIE blanket).

All of our personas had a positive interaction in general, even if they all started in a lower emotional and mental state, as expected in times of isolation and loneliness. After exposure to the blanket their feelings varied between, satisfied, comforted, calm or tranquil.



In Maria's case, she had to ask for help from her relatives to understand how the blanket worked. All the others experienced the first usage as an easy and intuitive process.

Design of the visual aspects

Logo design

For the design of the Logo, we decide to keep it simple. Nevertheless it can be associated quickly with the physical product.

We work with clear and static lines in the front, which stay in contrast to the organic and round shapes in the background. The line extends the letter E of the typographical element and represents the connection between the users. It forms a rectangle which symbolizes a blanket and is the simplest form for our logo.

In the complete version we add 2 irregular shapes in the back, which are simple blanket shapes again, but illustrated as more organic and cozy elements. The shapes can be pink & green or orange & lilac.

The font is connected to the sensation of comfort, we experience while using the blanket.

The name "HOMIE" influenced the choice of the typography. We choose "Righteous" because of its strong but organic appearance.

Name and Line - White or Grey - #5E5E5E; Irregular shapes - Green - #80836B; Rose - #D5C3B8; Orange - #B27F45; Lilac - #B7B6BB

The physical product works parallel with the digital ones, the HOMIE application and the website. All visual aspects and sensations are similar when using both.

The first interaction with the public and the point of sale for our product is the HOMIE website.

Here features of the product and its usage are explained. Here for us it is essential that the design of the purchase process is fast and easy to understand.

Wireframe / Design of the App

Options: The app can be used by both, those who own a blanket and those who don't but simply want to interact with friends.

- Interaction flow: We organized the app by pages to show the content of each screen. Mental map of the interaction flow [here](#).

- Wireframes: The wireframes helped us to have a first layout for the HOMIE App.

- Interactions in Application:

Tool bar: We created a tool bar in the bottom for an easy guiding through the application.

Its menu contains Settings, My blanket/profile, List of friends and Make friends/search friends.

Settings: In the settings menu you have the possibility to customize your experience.

My blanket / profile: On the profile you can switch your blanket on and off. Depending on if you want to receive touches from your homies or not.

Make / List of friends: After you add your friends to your "list of friends" you have the possibility to interact with them. Send a simple touch (vibration) or a light draw.

- Color Scheme. We decide to use a subtle grey for text and buttons and a light beige for the background. To customize the profile you can choose between pink, green, orange or lilac (our color scheme). In the initial pages, like login and create account, have use the irregular shapes in order to connect with the logo.

Wireframe / Design of the Website

- Architecture: Because of its simple functionality (information + sales point), the website only have one page with different sections. Sections: Home, About us, Shop, Services and Contacts.

Color Scheme: Connecting to the app, we use the beige as background color to convey tranquility, and the colors of the logo to divide the sections. Here we use orange for

buttons and titles because it's the most appealing color in our palette.

User testing results

In preparation for the User testing session (which was supposed to happen in person) we created a script. The script is divided into three parts, and contains in total 40 questions:

- WARM UP: About us, our idea and a section of questions about the person and how they are dealing with isolation.

- INTRODUCTION: A Section about the name "HOMIE", a section about the app usability and a small task section, to understand if our App is intuitive and easy to understand.

- FINAL QUESTIONS: Comments / feedback.

Due to the isolation extension we had to adapt the user testing, we used the Google forms creation tool, which allowed us to reach a larger number of people and have all the answers organized.

Link to the form. The results can also be consulted here.

Results: Our survey was answered by 33 people, nine men and 24 women between the age of 19 and 60 years. In general they are coping well with isolation, but having some moments of sadness and loneliness. What they are missing most is to be outside with people they like and the ones they normally live with. They also feel a lack of security.

The app was considered to be intuitive and easy and 90% of the people said they would use the product more than once.

Conclusion: The product is received and understood well. It strengthened the belief in our concept and the chance of having a good sales number.

Video

Proof of concept video: Our video presents a narrative (storyline) of the problem and the project developed in context of use.

We chose a simple narrative that is easy to follow. Therefore we came back to our Persona “Svenja” who is isolated at home and having a long distance relationship with her boyfriend. While spending time alone, in separate houses all they want is being together.

Svenja receives a surprise package, which turns out to be from her boyfriend who ordered the HOMIE blanket for her. Svenja gets intrigued, discovers the website, downloads the HOMIE application and starts using it.

Some frames show the interaction of the HOMIE blanket. Svenja and her boyfriend discover a new way of feeling connected without talking by phone or being with each other.

In the last scene the couple feels united again and more relaxed being alone.

For the light and color choice of the video, we opted for bright colors and lots of natural light to make it appealing and relaxing for the viewer with the ultimate goal of creating a desire of purchase.

